

CABINET – 21 JUNE 2011

YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE INSPECTION 2011

Report by Director for Children, Education and Families

Introduction

1. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) was subject to a week-long Core Case Inspection in February 2011. The purpose of the inspection was to make a retrospective judgement about the quality of casework performance over the preceding twelve months. This was undertaken as part of Her Majesty's Inspection of Probation (HMIP) national inspection programme of youth justice services.
2. The Inspection Report was published on 8th June 2011. This is attached as Annex 1. The inspection focussed on 62 cases. It did not review any other aspect of the YOS.
3. Inspectors have highlighted a number of strengths along with areas for improvement. An Improvement Plan has been drafted which reflects the HMIP judgements and the YOS is implementing the necessary improvements. (See Annex 2) Much of what was identified by the Inspectorate was in broad terms known to the service and plans had been developed to begin to address these.
4. The inspection covered three key areas – risk of harm, likelihood of re-offending and safeguarding, with each area being given one of four HMIP ratings:
 - Drastic improvement required
 - Substantial improvement required
 - Moderate improvement required
 - Minimal improvement required.
5. Whilst this inspection has concentrated on a specific area of the work of the YOS it is important to acknowledge that there are other areas of the service that have been judged by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) as doing the well. The annual 2010 Self Assessment validated by the Board found that, in relation to service delivery, the YOS has excellent capacity and capability to sustain and improve performance and that the service was performing adequately against national indicators and particularly positively in relation to First Time Entrants and Education, Training and Employment.

Issues

6. The report provides a detailed outline of the work of the inspectorate and the findings of the inspection. The main areas requiring improvement are:
 - Timeliness and quality of recording, assessment and planning particularly in relation to risk.
 - Quality and consistency of management oversight.

7. In addition to the deficits a number of areas of positive practice have been highlighted:
- Work with victims
 - Satisfaction rates by children and young people
 - Good practice case examples, particularly in relation to diversity and involvement in planning.
 - Good inter-agency work, particularly in relation to safeguarding.
 - Good level of content and high levels of enthusiasm and commitment to children and young people.
 - Demonstration of a range of good quality interventions.
8. The deficits outlined in the inspection report will be addressed in an Improvement Plan to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board in July 2011. This is to be agreed and monitored by the local YOS Board with the assistance of the Youth Justice Board. There is no planned re-inspection.
9. In commenting upon the Inspection Julie Fox the Assistant Chief Inspector of Probation commented that:

“We judged that the Safeguarding aspects of the work (in Oxfordshire) were done well enough 71% of the time. With the Public Protection aspects, work to keep to a minimum each individual’s *Risk of Harm to others* was done well enough 56% of the time, and the work to make each individual less likely to reoffend was done well enough 68% of the time. These figures can be viewed in the context of our findings from Wales and the regions of England inspected so far – see the Table below.

	Score from Wales and the English regions that have Been inspected to date			Scores for Oxfordshire
	Lowest	Highest	Average	
‘Safeguarding’ work <i>(action to protect the young person)</i>	37%	91%	68%	71%
‘risk of Harm to others’ work <i>(action to protect the public)</i>	36%	85%	63%	56%
‘Likelihood of Reoffending’ work <i>(individual less likely to reoffend)</i>	43%	87%	70%	68%

“Overall, we consider this an average set of findings. The service was already aware of some of the areas of work requiring improvement, and had the commitment, and plans in place, to address them.”

10. The recommendations within the report are that:
- A timely and good quality assessment and plan, using Asset, is completed when the case starts specifically, a timely and good quality assessment of the individual’s vulnerability and *Risk of Harm to others* is completed at the start, as appropriate to the specific case;
 - As a consequence of the assessment, the record of the intervention plan is specific about what will now be done in order to safeguard the

child or young person from harm, to make them less likely to reoffend, and to minimise any identified *Risk of Harm to others*;

- The plan of work with the case is regularly reviewed and correctly recorded in Asset with a frequency consistent with national standards for youth offending services;
 - There is regular and effective oversight by management, especially of screening decisions, that is clearly recorded within the case record, as appropriate to the specific case.
11. The major re-structuring of Children, Education and Families Directorate is in progress following consultation from February – April 2011. As a consequence of the timing of the YOS Inspection, plans for the YOS were delayed until the inspection outcome was known. This was in order to give due weight to the findings, the restructuring of the YOS was delay until the outcome was known. This work is ongoing. It has been determined that the YOS will be located within Children's Social Care. This will allow for greater integration of core training, assessment, planning, risk management and quality assurance provision.
 12. The oversight of the implementation of the YOS Improvement Plan has been included in the Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan 2010-13 Year 2 Action Plan and will also be monitored at a strategic level by the YOS Board and the Youth Justice Board.
 13. The Youth Justice Board will provide both a monitoring and a support role in implementing the Improvement Plan.

Financial and Staff Implications

14. Any financial implications regarding a Workforce Development Strategy will be addressed in the over-arching Children's Social Care strategy, rather than separately in relation to the YOS.

RECOMMENDATION

15. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the findings of the YOS Inspection.**

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